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kill her, and after he had followed her a long distance she changed herself back into a woman. They lived together for several years. In the meantime it was thought that the man had been killed. Finally she accompanied him to his village as his wife, where she gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl. They grew up and took their proper places in the village. At first the deer wife disliked living in the village and often tried to run away, but afterwards she became reconciled and gave birth to other twins. Thereafter her descendants in the female line always gave birth to twins, and from this woman are supposed to be descended all the twins ever born among the Skidi.

Finally, it may be noted that no pregnant woman could come near the ceremonial contests where the medicine-men threw their medicine "arrows" at each other. Ordinarily she might be a very powerful medicine-woman and be able to protect herself from the "arrows" of her opponents, but during this period her thought and mind were on her child and consequently she could not ward off the "arrows," which would fly to her and kill her.

On the first indication of labor the husband left the lodge and did not return to his wife for four days, as his presence during this time was thought to increase the difficulty of birth. The husband continued to observe the restrictions on his conduct, such as abstention from hunting, which were in force during the period of pregnancy. Also he unbraided his hair and wore it loose, for it was believed that Tirawa wore his hair in this manner when he was creating the universe.

With the approach of labor the wife herself selected an old woman, who was usually a medicine-woman or the keeper of a sacred bundle, to be midwife. The latter came, bringing her medicine bag and a wooden bowl in which to wash the child. Sometimes the bowl was covered with representations of a dog, goose, deer, or some other animal, so that when the child grew up it would possess the magic power of the animal depicted. On arriving at the lodge, the midwife brought in some fresh earth and spread it upon the floor. Over this she put a thick covering of soft grass. The flow of blood following delivery could thereby be absorbed by the earth and grass and the whole easily removed. Next several parfleches were piled for a head-rest, and the pregnant woman was laid in the place prepared for her.

With the beginning of labor the mother was given some medicine by the midwife and told that it would relieve her and make for an easy birth. Should the woman give birth before the arrival of

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844 the midwife, it was said that the child was afraid of her and so hurried and was born before she came. On the other hand, if the birth were delayed and the confined woman in great pain, it was the duty of her relatives to send for one or two other women to assist the midwife. These helped in trying to hasten the birth. If they [755] failed, the medicine-men were called. The latter came into the lodge with gourd rattles and sang their medicine songs. Then they gave medicine to the woman. If it was time for her to give birth, it was thought that delivery would speedily follow; if it was not time, she would at least be relieved.

In delivery the woman usually rested on her knees, leaning forward on a stick brought for that purpose by the midwife. Those of high rank, belonging to the Four-Band village, were always permitted to use a short round stake from the Northeast, or Big [778] Black Meteoric-Star bundle, on which was fastened a buffalo scalp [821] containing a chart of the constellations, and which was supposed to have the effect of making delivery exceedingly easy.

When the child was born, the midwife cut the umbilical cord, [465] using a new knife given her as part of her pay. She rubbed ashes upon the cord until it shrank, then she twisted it around upon the child's navel, and tied a string around it. Contrary to the custom much in vogue among the Plains Indians, the mother retained the cord, wrapping it in a buckskin in a work-box; it was buried with her and never given to the child.

846 The midwife then washed the infant with warm water and dried [354] it with buffalo wool, wrapped it in a blanket, and placed it on a [553] cradleboard. Next she bestowed a name upon the baby and gave it to the mother's relatives. The afterbirth she disposed of in the following manner: placing it on a bunch of grass, and wrapping it in a piece of tanned buffalo-hide, she carried it outside into the woods. There she put it on a tree, saying: "I place this afterbirth upon you, that the animals may not eat it, nor the birds. You stand here firmly; let this child that I have attended grow up without sickness to be a man (or woman)." Next she said to the afterbirth: "I place you securely upon this tree, so that nothing will touch you, and so that you will turn into dust. If the mother who is sick yonder should give birth to another, make the delivery easy." The midwife then returned to the lodge.

After the dried cord broke off from the child's navel, the baby was washed in the little wooden bowl and turned over to the mother. The old woman who had acted as midwife combed and braided the

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mother's hair, while the husband also braided his. If the midwife's services were no longer required she was given a gift, usually consisting of a bowl of corn, dried pumpkins, and perhaps a parfleche of meat.

Should a woman die in childbirth or shortly thereafter, the death was generally ascribed to the violation on the woman's part of one of the taboos, especially the drinking of water, which was prohibited from the first labor pains until four days after delivery. Children were never killed in case the mother died in childbirth. Infanticide seems not to have been practiced by the Skidi, and in fact all inquiries upon this point elicited astonishment that such a thing could be imagined possible. If the mother had died while giving birth, the child was taken care of by its grandmothers, generally the maternal grandmother.

Stillbirth was also considered to be the result of the mother's infraction of some rule restricting her conduct during pregnancy. In such cases the child was interred in the burial ground of the parents' village, though it was never given a name.

In olden times, at the first signs of pregnancy of the wife, the grandmothers notified the wife's relatives to prepare an elm baby-board and the husband's a board of cottonwood. After the child had been born and was about to be laid on the baby-board for the first time, a wildcat's skin was placed on the board and the child wrapped in clothing and put upon the skin. The midwife said: "I place you upon this board; (if a boy) you shall grow up to make many meat offerings to the gods; (if a girl) you shall grow up to increase, so that your children will do many things for the gods." The wildcat's skin was then wrapped around the child. This was equivalent to saying, "I wrap the child with the heavens," for the hide represented the sky and stars. At the time of this little ceremony the lodge was filled with both father's and mother's relatives, who had brought with them robes, ear-rings, and other presents of all sorts for the child. Friends were also happy over the birth and came, bringing additional gifts. The young couple was especially pleased if the old women took the baby in their arms, for they believed it would increase the child's chance of reaching old age and being blessed with offspring. A few days later, the gifts brought by friends and relatives were given away, usually to poor women who had had many children and grandchildren. Thus the parents expressed their own desire for sons and daughters.

Although the Skidi medicine-men claimed to be able to cause abortion by the use of roots, it was not attempted by married

rubbing after it gets wet. If the tent cover was folded when wet it would get moldy. The sinew bowstring also would be ineffective when wet. Rain had very serious consequences when they had sliced a quantity of buffalo meat and were drying it on the rack. If it should be wet by a sudden storm, the meat throughout the encampment would be spoiled. There was nothing that could be done with this meat. If one tried to eat it, it tasted like dead wood. It fell to pieces in one's hands. Even if one tried to cure it over a fire, it simply rotted. Meat once exposed to rain, even after it had been cooked, became moldy next day. A rack of meat that had been rained on was called *kariks-kutu*, "rack-dead, spoiled." The meat had to be thrown away.

Accommodation and adjustment to rainy weather was therefore very important and a nice distinction had to be made between the problem of delay and the risks involved.

One day word was sent to White Eagle that an important man of the Man-Going-Downstream Band was so ill that he could not go on. White Eagle had to consider very carefully whether they would go ahead and leave him or delay the entire group. A day's delay might mean the difference between reaching the full herd on time or finding only stragglers left after the herd had passed. Considering, however, that the Man-Going-Downstream Band was in a "Child" relation in the Peace Pipe ritual to the Skidi and was in the process of giving them a return gift of horses, White Eagle diplomatically decided to delay the march so that the sick man could be treated by a doctor. It was also felt that if interband relationships were not solidified from time to time, one or the other of the South Bands might conceivably be induced to collaborate with the Sioux on some occasion. Then everyone would consider that White Eagle had failed in his administrative functions and in his diplomacy. The death of an influential man in another band would also be the occasion for delay until after the funeral. If the wife of a prominent man were about to give birth, the whole family of this tent and a doctor would stay behind and wait, and White Eagle would assign one of his principle braves to see that things were all right with "their Child" (in terms of the calumet), while the rest of the camp moved on. In the case of an expected birth to one of the wives of White Eagle himself, he would request Eagle Chief to lead on and say, "My wife is going to be sick." But Eagle Chief would refuse to go ahead saying, "I might spoil your luck. We can go on when she's well again." Ordinarily a woman would have to go aside while traveling and have her child in the open aside from the line of march. Also, in the case of death, the own family would usually stay behind and bury the person, then come on and join the rest. After a day's delay, everyone would be glad to be moving along.